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ENGLISH COURT HAND, A.D. 1066 TO 1500. Illustrated chiefly from the public records. By Charles Johnson and Hilary Jenkinson. In two parts. Part I: Text, pp. xlviii, 250; Part II: Frontispiece and xlv Plates. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1915.

A work worth doing and wonderfully well done. Those of us who have tried to decipher the court hand of the later middle ages without help from those skilled in the art have sought in vain for books which would really clear up difficulties. A short study of this book should enable one to read any court-hand manuscript sufficiently accurately for ordinary purposes.

The text may be divided into three parts. The first is a general sketch of the development of court hand, a description of methods of abbreviation, a list of common abbreviations and of ligatures, hints on transcription, a classification of documents written in court hand, and a bibliography. This part is clearly written, and is a sufficient though concise introduction to the reading of court-hand manuscripts. The second part is a history of the form of the separate letters, abbreviations and signs, numerals and punctuation and paragraph marks. This part is most valuable. Typical letter-forms, separated from their context, are so brought together that the development of form can be seen, and the typical forms of a given time may be distinguished from later and earlier forms. The reproduction of the forms is made with great clearness, and it is quite apparent that in an obscurely written bit the most welcome help could be had by comparison with these type-forms. The third part consists in a transcription of the documents which are given in facsimile in the volume of plates.

This second volume of plates is one of the best — may the reviewer not speak in superlatives, and say the very best — facsimile reproductions of manuscripts extant, not even forgetting the wonderful reproduction of the Florentine manuscript of Justinian's Digest. Both in line and in color the plates leave nothing to be desired. The documents are well selected to give a complete picture of court hand. They are charters, writs, exchequer rolls, plea rolls, fines, deeds, bonds, memoranda, and letters — all the current writings of the time.

A study of the plates, with the help of the text, would certainly enable one to read any ordinary manuscripts of the middle ages, and to check the transcription of another. What can we do but be grateful for this luxurious tool, and hope for time to use it? Each part may be procured separately, but who, having one, could bear to lack the other?

J. H. BEALE.

A SKETCH OF ENGLISH LEGAL HISTORY. By Frederic W. Maitland and Francis C. Montague. Edited with notes and appendices by James F. Colby. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1915. pp. x, 229.

Professor Colby has performed a service in collecting in this little book articles by Maitland and Montague, which have appeared scattered through Traill's *Social England*, and in arranging them to form a connected history of English Law. Occasionally he has added in brackets extracts from Jenks' short history and from Pollock and Maitland's larger work in order to aid the continuity. But these additions are few. More valuable are the editor's own list of readings which follow each chapter. They are well chosen, and, while not exhaustive, are useful to the law student who is seriously investigating legal history. For these short essays are really of more value to the layman than to him. In 187 pages one can give but a very brief outline of our system of law. Necessarily it is the machinery by which the law was made that is emphasized, not the development of law in particular internal branches.